



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



**2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546  
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546**

Public Hearing-February 27, 2023  
Transportation Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto  
Department of Transportation

## **S.B. 1079 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMUTER RAIL COUNCIL.**

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) respectfully offers the following comments regarding S.B. 1079, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Commuter Rail Council.

Section 1 of the bill requires CTDOT to restore service on the Shore Line East rail line to the same level of service that existed prior to the COVID-19 and purchase and install new rail cars for use on the Waterbury and Danbury branches of the New Haven line. Such initiatives require funding above and beyond CTDOT's current appropriated funds. Governor Lamont's proposed FY 24-25 biennial budget does not include funds that would be needed for these initiatives.

Section 2 of the bill requires CTDOT to study the feasibility of developing and maintaining a mobile application for public transportation. The proponents of the concept may not be aware that Public Act 22-40 included language in Section 27 requiring CTDOT to develop and maintain a mobile app to integrate real-time transit information from all transit districts and provide trip planning services. Recognizing that the private sector has developed several well-regarded mobile applications that provide this service, CTDOT spent the past several months working to integrate GTFS data from most of the state's transit systems and passenger rail systems into a publicly accessible format. To promote the use of mobile device trip planning services, on February 14, 2023, CTDOT launched a free one-year subscription to *Transit Royale* for all bus and rail riders in the state of Connecticut; *Transit Royale* provides users with advanced trip planning features beyond their immediate area, and aggregates real-time transit location information. Users will soon be able to also pay for their bus trips through mobile applications, to make riding as easy as possible.

Section 3 requires CTDOT to conduct a fare equity analysis to evaluate the proposed implementation of permanent fare-free bus public transportation service in the state in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. CTDOT currently is conducting a comprehensive Statewide Unified Fare study that will also take a look at the impacts of free fares on the bus systems in Connecticut's public transportation service. It is our strong recommendation that we be allowed to complete this study in partnership with our transit district partners across the state.

One of the bedrock principles of public transportation programs in the United States is that of nondiscrimination. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. This extends to all programs and activities funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which includes all bus public transit systems in Connecticut. The FTA Office of Civil Rights is responsible for monitoring FTA recipients' Title VI programs and ensuring their compliance with Title VI requirements.

FTA implements Title VI through oversight by the Office of Civil Rights and requires each agency receiving FTA funds to prepare a Title VI policy, to prepared detailed equity analyses of any significant service changes, as well as all fare changes. An equity analysis is a complicated and detailed work product that can take six to nine months to complete and is not intended to look at hypothetical situations outside of the control of the studying entity. As fares in transit districts are not set by CTDOT, it is not possible for CTDOT to conduct a federally compliant Title VI-rooted fare equity analysis for systems outside of our control. Any fare equity analysis would also need to be fiscally constrained and reflect the budgeted resources of the agency providing the transit services.

Section 4 of the bill makes changes to the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council, placing the Rail Council within CTDOT for administrative purposes only. Governor Lamont's proposed FY 24-25 biennial budget does not include funds that would be needed for this change. CTDOT has proposed alternative language that would expand the scope of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council to include all public transportation users in Connecticut, and we strongly encourage the Committee to look to provide greater equity by providing an opportunity for all public transportation users in our state to serve on a unified council.

Section 5 of the bill to permit municipalities to submit two applications under the Community Connectivity Grant program (CCGP) when at least one application is for eligible project types and is located within ¾ miles of a commuter rail station, either already constructed or at a location with construction funding for a future station is fully obligated. While the Department supports the intent of this proposal, it should be noted that the CCGP is a highly competitive grant program where Connecticut municipalities self-select their most competitive and highest needed eligible project. Any municipality who determines their greatest need is to increase access to a commuter station or BRT station-stop may already prioritize this type of project for their application. Additionally, the CCGP is a State Discretionary Grant program that allows for the flexibility to award additional weighting to projects of certain types and does not require legislation to do so. For example, the most recent round of CCGP is awarding additional weighting where such application improves access to traditionally underserved communities otherwise known as Environmental Justice Communities, or to applications in communities who have developed a Complete Streets Plan or have supporting Complete Streets Policies. Lastly, the Department supports the intent of the proposal: maintaining parity among all Connecticut communities, both urban, and rural. That said, allowing those municipalities with a Commuter Rail station, or BRT station-stop to apply for two applications could result in an unequal distribution of limited funding. If this provision were to proceed, CTDOT suggests this should also include Bus Rapid Transit stations where such station is part of a fixed guideway system, such as CTfastrak.

For further information or questions, please contact Anne Kleza ([anne.kleza@ct.gov](mailto:anne.kleza@ct.gov)) at the Department of Transportation at (860) 594-3013.